Women are definitely capable of applying formulas other than for similac. There are many ways of putting women's talents to work, and amateur radio is one of them.

Women In Amateur Radio

BY JANICE SHILLINGTON*, N9YL

Now are the days of women's lib, with more job opportunities opening up for women than at any other time. Women have a choice. Marriage and children are not a must. (It reminds me of the volunteer army!) Instead, marriage and/or children are happily a choice many women are making. There are as many kinds of housewives (or domestic engineers) and mothers as there are working women. But then again there are similarities between these groups. Some women are terrific cleaners, bakers, sewers, PTA'ers; for other women there are those whose whole world revolves around their jobs.

I am afraid that I do not fit into that category. I am what you could call an average housewife. Let me add that I am not stupid, nor on the other hand am I particularly brilliant. In high school there were many other girls doing algebra, physics (I just passed that one), and other science courses. I stress this because while many of our algebraic formulas, science concepts, etc., have not been used in our occupation of homemaker, we learned them once and somewhere in the recesses of our brains they are still lurking. In other words, we definitely are still capable of learning and applying formulas other than for similac. Over the years of changing diapers and wiping noses, we tend to forget that fact. (So do our husbands!) That's why I am so surprised by the look of shock that people have when I tell them I am a licensed amateur radio operator. I am writing this article because I know that you too can be an amateur radio operator—if you want to be. I never really thought much about amateur radio until a couple of years ago. I will try to express the joy, thrill, challenge and excitement of this hobby so that you will want to find out for yourselves.

Amateur radio is a friend, a flip of a switch away, any time of the day or night. You send your signal out, it hits the ionosphere and is bounced back to the earth. Anyone who can hear your signal can answer you because the other person's signal will be reflected by the ionosphere in the same manner. (I feel a little like I'm gambling.) Different frequency bands have different characteristics at different times of the day and night. The sunspot cycle also has a great effect on radio signals.

I have met many exciting, interesting people in amateur radio. The other night, I communicated with an exploratory geologist who works for an oil company—all in Morse code. At the time he was in New Zealand and had worked many years in Iran where his children were born. I asked him, since he had told me of his extensive travels, what place in the world did he find to be the most beautiful. He then told me about a remote spot in southern Iran. In return, I told him about my exciting life of being a housewife.

Language is not a problem in amateur radio. There are international "Q" signals which transcend the language barrier. For example, QTH means "what is your location"; QRZ means "who is calling me"; QRV, "I am ready"; QRU, "I have nothing for you"; QRL, "I am busy"; and so forth.

Also on Morse code I spoke with a radio operator on a Norwegian vessel. He told me that they were QTO (left dock) from Norfolk, Virginia with a load of coal on their way to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to pick up more coal, and then they were going all the way to Japan. He said that the skies were gray and it was drizzling in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. It sounded very lonely. There I was, sitting in my own home communicating with another human being who was sitting in the middle of the ocean. (I can't even swim!)

Here we get into one of the basic purposes of amateur radio as defined in the Rules and Regulations of the Federal Comunications Commission, part 97: "...the amateur's unique ability to enhance international good will." You are saying, "I am an American; here I am. This is me." You are giving the other people in the world an impression of America because America is what its people are.

My girlfriend (yes women are just as involved in amateur radio as men are, only our numbers are fewer; approximately 5% of the U.S. amateurs are women), Marily Backys, WB9TDR, has recently been making phone patches with Antarctica. That's right, the South Pole. Phone patching is as follows: After making a telephone call to the requested number (collect if it's long distance), the radio is then "patched" with the telephone set so the callers can converse. The call is monitored in order to switch the speakers on and off. Here is a man literally at the end of the world, conversing with his family through amateur radio.

Gerry Johnson, K7YDO, made over 12,000 phone patches for servicemen, maritime mobiles and other stations without access to telephones during the years 1967 to 1971. She experienced some of the sadness and horror of war and also the feeling of being able to do something, to help during this terrible time. Her experiences

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Say You Saw It In CQ

are not unique, because many amateur radio operators did the same.

The woman in amateur radio is certainly equal—the same, but different. Many YL (young lady) operators have told me how different contacts respond to the female voice. Carol Bourne, WA9NEJ, told me about her contact with Ascension Island, off the coast of Africa. She was the first woman to talk with them in many months. They asked her for all the up-to-date U.S. news, such as baseball scores. I guess that the sound of a woman's voice has many associated pleasant memories, such as apple pie and motherhood, and makes them feel closer to home.

With amateur radio you can leave your home, travel around the world, make new friends here and abroad without physically moving. Handicapped people are on an equal basis with everyone else in amateur radio. Imagine how this wonderful hobby can open up a new life to these people (and you, too).

Alice Johnson has just recently discovered the joys of amateur radio. She lost her family, her husband through an illness and her 18-year-old son to Vietnam. She retired in Missouri where she has taken a course in amateur radio taught by the Central Missouri Amateur Radio Club of Sedalia. Many amateur clubs offer courses to help would-be amateurs gain their FCC licenses. She is an active, energetic woman looking for a little more out of life at the age of 61. She has been blind since the age of 10. The loss of her family has made her very lonely. Now she feels that she belongs—belongs to the family of amateur radio operators. There really is a feeling of fraternity in amateur radio.

Alice mentioned to me how good it was to study again. Learning radio theory can be work to those of us without any radio background. But there are many easy-to-learn books available, and of course, there are other amateurs to discuss theory with you. Morse code can be a challenge to some, but anyone with any type of musical background should not have a difficult time. The desire to get a license, average intelligence, and perseverance are all it really takes to get an FCC license. You can buy used equipment and set up a station for anywhere from $100 to $200 and up.

I have met many interesting people from all walks of life through amateur radio—doctors, policemen, detectives, state troopers, farmers and more. I once talked with a barber in Arkansas, and he told me that his garden did not have as many strawberries as usual or he would have sent me some. The other day I spoke with another gentleman from New Orleans, Louisiana. He was telling me about his teenage days when he was a radio operator on a freighter; it really sounded like fun. Now he is a professor of anatomy at a medical school. I've talked with Navy personnel, Coast Guard, not to mention engineers, to whom I spring all my confusing questions on radio theory out of the clear blue sky. (In amateur radio you are continually learning!) What I am trying to say is that amateur radio is people communicating, just talking and learning about each other.

One of the basic purposes of amateur radio, according to FCC Rules and Regulations, is voluntary public service "...with respect to providing emergency communications." Remember the Guatemalan earthquake in February, 1976? Twenty minutes after that disaster devastated the city, an amateur radio station, TG9CP, was desperately searching for someone to relay that terrible disaster to the world since all normal communications were gone. On 40 meters he found two U.S. amateurs rag chewing. He immediately broke in on the conversation and told them of the plight of Guatemala City. One station contacted the Red Cross and the other, the State Department. Amateurs in the U.S. went into action establishing emergency nets and passing health and welfare messages. For example, the Wheaton Community Radio Amateurs Club received a request to find out if a doctor's family who lived in Guatemala City was all right. The message came back through amateur radio that his wife and daughter were okay. This was a health and welfare message.

The Guam typhoon, the flood disaster in Big Thompson Canyon in Colorado—these are all emergencies in which amateur radio helped. There are countless examples, large and small, but the point is that amateur radio is valuable, voluntary public service.

Amateur radio is also a hobby. The FCC Rules and Regulations state that amateur radio must be "...with a personal aim and without pecuniary or business interest."

Technical experimenting is very fascinating for many amateurs. I have friends who would rather build than talk, and their talking is limited to their experimenting and improving their stations. (I am the opposite!)

Amateur radio has gone satellite. Yes, that's right. Amateur operators now have two working satellites in orbit, OSCAR 6 and OSCAR 7 (OSCAR for Orbital Satellite Carrying Amateur Radio.) Amateurs can work through these satellites for contacts. NASA allows OSCAR to be launched on such things as their weather rockets instead of dead weight ballast for the purpose of public education of space science.

QSL cards are confirmation cards sent by amateurs confirming the date, time, frequency, etc., of the contact. They are really fascinating to receive. You can find out how you can work OSCAR, how you can receive your own QSL cards and general information on how to become an amateur by writing to American Radio Relay League, 225 Main Street, Newington, Conn. 06111.

This hobby is for YOU. You can meet interesting, fascinating people and talk with them, exchange ideas—live. Yet it is not a full-time commitment—it is there at your convenience 24 hours a day, each day. You open and close the switch. Amateur radio is for you, an individual person. The door is open, please come in.

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